



“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

Promise of A Better Day

Central Truth: God’s people should be encouraged by the realization that there is a better day ahead.

L545. Date: February 1980. **Text:** Zechariah 7:8-12; 8:3, 8-13.

Topic: Israel: Restoration of.

The best is yet to be. Bless the Lord! A Christian cannot help but be optimistic. There is always a blessed hope lying ahead beckoning God's people to that better thing which is ahead.

The prospect of a better day was the theme of the two prophets who ministered in Judea during the building of the temple under Zerubbabel, ca. 535 B.C. to 516 B.C. Their names were Haggai and Zechariah. Each pointed to the desperate condition of the restored community as proof that they were not obeying God in building the temple. Each promised better days for the nation when God’s will was done in completion of construction of His house. Their promise of a better day set forth some principles which can encourage Christians today to look for the ultimate victory provided them in Jesus.

The historical setting of this lesson predates the last two lessons in this series. It should be related to the theme of the lesson studied on January 20, 1980. The Hebrews had begun building the temple, but slacked in their work because of discouragement. They concluded that the time was not right to build the house of God. God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to stir up their zeal and get them to finish the task. The ministry of those two prophets will be the subject for study in this lesson and the next.

I. THE CAUSE OF THE CURSE

A problem must be recognized in order to be corrected. God used Zechariah to bring to the attention of the Jews the cause of their problem before He spoke of its remedy or the blessings which should follow it.

A. A message from God (7:7). — Consider the scope of grace in the statement, “The Word of the LORD came unto Zechariah.” How good God is to speak. He has revealed himself through nature, providence, visions, dreams, rituals, and through His own voice to His prophets. (Christians are even more blessed because God has revealed himself through His only begotten Son.) The greatest thrill of man should be to receive the message of God.

The blessing can turn into a curse when the message of God is ignored by man. God spoke through His prophets to ancient Judah. When she rejected His words and abused His messengers, she sealed her doom (II Chronicles 36:15, 16). The cause of the curse on Judah was her rejection of God's words.

B. A call for ethics (7:8-10) — What did God require of His people? He required them to be just, to show mercy, to be compassionate, to be benevolent to any person in need, and to refrain from any thought of evil against a brother. That is a perfectly reasonable requirement.

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8).

It is the duty of every man and woman of faith to keep the commandments of the Lord: *“And his commandments are not grievous”* (I John 5:3). They carry no burden. The greatest of all possible blessings is to keep the word of God completely.

C. A rejection of duty (7:11, 12) — The will of the people of ancient Judah was in rebellion against God. They did not want to hear His words or do His commandments. Like a rebellious child, they turned from the Lord God. (1) They turned away their ears that they might not hear. (2) They jerked about their body, as if shrugging another's hand from the shoulder, and turning away. (3) They stopped their ears, lest they hear against their will. (4) They hardened their hearts against any holy impression God might send upon them. They rejected God, and He rejected them.

“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

D. A solemn judgment (7:12) — *“Therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.”* The judgment came in the form of exile into Babylon, loss of material wealth in Palestine, much physical strain, and the shame of

being a captive people in a foreign land. They lost their religious center, represented by the temple in Jerusalem, but their religion was depraved anyway for they had forsaken the Lord. The only alternative to repentance is destruction. Judah learned that hard lesson by experience.

II. THE BASIS OF BLESSINGS

Zechariah and Haggai announced the coming of a better day. The people of the restored community in Palestine were given promises which provided a foundation for their hope. The basis of their blessings are the same as the Christian's basis of blessings today.

A. Presence of God (8:3) — “Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain” The presence of God manifest in any place will make it a veritable heaven on earth. Nothing will substitute for the blessing of His presence.

The Christian enjoys the personal presence of God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Every person who is saved has the life of God lived in him by the Spirit of God. All the blessings that come by God's presence are guaranteed to the Christian.

B. Relationship with God (8:8) — There is that statement again, *“They shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”* That idea is expressed many times in Holy Scripture. It means God will be to His people all that they will ever need in a God, and they will be to Him all He ever wants in a people. There will be complete, mutual satisfaction and delight. Wonderful!

That spirit is perfectly experienced by the Christian who finds Jesus “precious” through faith (I Peter 2:7). To call God our “Father,” and to have the witness of the Spirit that we are His children, is the highest blessedness.

C. Message from God (8:9) — God commanded His people to be strong in obeying His word by the prophets. There is no blessing without obedience. In fact, divine approval in blessings is but the by-product of the obedience of faith. There can be no sense of approval in the heart of the believer unless there is a delight in doing the will of God from the heart. The prophet Zechariah called Judah to follow the expressed will of God, without excuse or delay, and rebuild the temple.

Have you noticed the tendency of many to want to receive the blessings

of God without the obedience of faith! Impossible. The divine priority (obedience and then blessing) is set forth distinctly in the Word of God.

D. Prosperity from God (8:10-12) — God has many ways to discipline His children. One is to withhold material prosperity from them. That was what happened in Judah when she postponed building the temple. Haggai wrote, “*Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes*” (Haggai 1:6). That is the consequence of disobedience in every generation.

It need not be so. God will deal faithfully with the faithful. “*The seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things*” (verse 12). That is the reward of the faithful.

E. Blessing for God (8:13) — God does not bless His people just to make them blessed, but to make them a blessing. As they were scattered among the heathen as a sign of the judgment of God upon them, they will be gathered into their own land as a sign of God's blessings upon them. God promised, “*So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong*” (verse 13). What an incentive to faithful obedience!

Think of the practical applications of the lesson. Any people who ignore the message of God, live below the standard given of God, and reject the messengers of God are headed for the judgment of God (7:8-12). On the other hand, the people who welcome the presence of God, have a personal relationship with God, and receive with obedience the message of God will experience the prosperity of God and become a blessing for God (8:3, 8-13). Which of the two alternatives do you choose for your life? You have the power to determine which it will be when, by an act of your will, you resist God or submit to Him. “Trust and obey, for there's no other way / To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey” — J. H. Sammis.

1. Who was Zechariah?
2. What was his historical situation?
3. Why did God speak through him?
4. How did he receive his message?
5. How does Zechariah 7:8-10 relate to Micah 6:8?
6. How is Proverbs 29:1 demonstrated in Zechariah 7:12?
7. How does the Christian know God's presence today?

8. What does Zechariah 8:8 mean to you?
9. How does God speak to His people today?
10. How is blessing related to obedience today?